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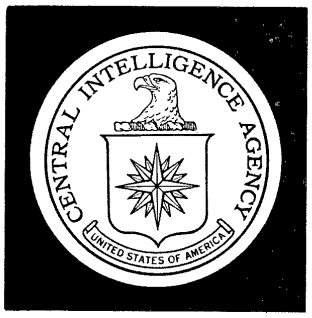

The President's Daily Brief

20 January 1970

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

20 January 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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The Communists seem about ready to step up the pace in South Vietnam. *(Page 1)*

The Chinese road in Laos [redacted] *(Page 2)* 50X1

Testing of Soviet missiles continues. *(Page 3)*

East Germany's Walter Ulbricht uses a rare press conference to reiterate his terms for negotiating with Willy Brandt. *(Page 4)*

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SOUTH VIETNAM

We have ample evidence that a widespread intensification of Communist military activity is likely, probably at or before the Tet holidays--6-8 February. Some enemy units have been ordered to make attacks no later than 6 February, and an unusually explicit document found near Hue states that "we are ready for the Tet offensive." The reporting suggests the new effort will be more highly coordinated than past "highpoints."

Our analysis indicates much of the action will be aimed against South Vietnamese forces. Two recent Liberation Radio broadcasts strongly hinted that Saigon's pacification program was damaging the enemy's ability to control important segments of the population, and they called for renewed military vigor to counter it.

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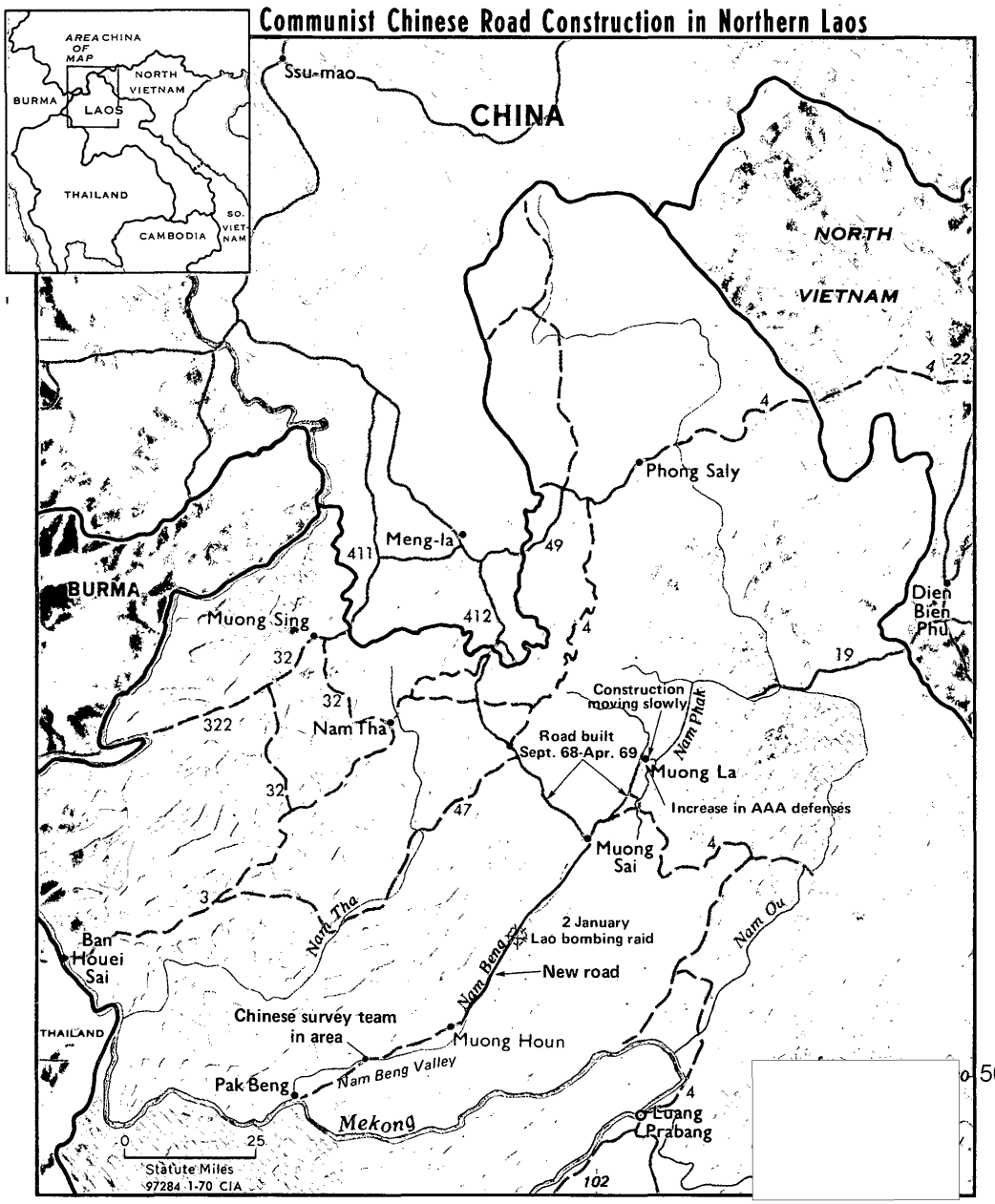
Communist Chinese Road Construction in Northern Laos



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LAOS

[redacted] a Communist survey team was placing surveying markers some 17 miles south of Muong Houn on 8 January. Local villagers claim that the Pathet Lao have stated the road will be completed to Pak Beng "some time in 1970." In addition, Pathet Lao officials are rounding up villagers who have fled the Muong Houn area over the past year, possibly to draft them for further road construction.

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This is the first evidence that the Communists are actively planning to extend the road beyond Muong Houn this year.

[redacted]

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USSR

On 18 January the Soviets conducted the ninth test of the modified SS-11 ICBM since July--a rate of testing that suggests a priority development program. As in previous tests, the missile flew some 3,400 miles from Tyuratam to Kamchatka.

The modifications involve both the missile and the payload, but their purpose is not yet clear. [redacted] 50X1

Furthermore, the re-entry vehicle has a higher velocity during re-entry than does the standard SS-11 re-entry vehicle, and this would be less vulnerable to ABM defenses.

If the development of penetration aids is the goal of this program, and if testing continues at the present rate, operational status could be achieved by late this year.

* * *

An unidentified missile was launched from Plesetsk to Kamchatka on 16 January. [redacted] 50X1 50X1

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EAST GERMANY

East German leader Ulbricht said yesterday in a press conference in East Berlin that Pankow is willing to negotiate with Bonn. He stressed, however, that East Germany will continue to press its "minimum demands," including diplomatic recognition. Moreover, Ulbricht indicated he is in no hurry to begin talks. He said the East Germans will await the outcome of the Moscow-Bonn negotiations on the renunciation of force agreement.

The major practical effect of Ulbricht's temporizing may be that the Poles will find it easier to deal with the West Germans when their general political negotiations begin early in February, simply because Ulbricht will be unable to interject his demands into the negotiating process.

The East Germans had indicated earlier that they wished to engage Bonn in talks before the Poles and other Eastern Europeans did so. The switch in tactics now suggests that Ulbricht has failed to persuade his allies to put East German interests ahead of their own.

There is evidence that Ulbricht cleared his remarks with Moscow, and the Soviets may have exerted some pressure on him to switch tactics.

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NOTES

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Dominican Republic:

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Panama: Pressure is increasing for the resumption of talks with the US about revising the 1903 Canal Treaty. On Friday, Foreign Minister Tack asked Ambassador Sayre when the US would be ready for such discussions. He said his government wants to announce the date to the public. Strongman Torrijos is aware that the Provisional Junta Government has not accomplished much in its 15 months in power, and he may wish to use his commitment to revision of the treaty in a bid for sustained public support.

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